French Immersion in Manitoba

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1. Learning French

1.1 What is French Immersion?

French Immersion is a second language program designed for children whose first language is not French and who have little or no knowledge of French prior to entering the program.[1]

The goal of French Immersion is to give students the opportunity to achieve, by secondary school graduation, a level of bilingualism sufficient to function well in a French-speaking community, accept a job using French as the working language, or take university or college education in French. "Beyond its linguistic and cultural dimensions, the program aims to develop the academic skills, the personal, social and career skills, and the life management skills that future citizens will need to develop their individual potential and contribute to the economic, social and cultural life in Manitoba."[2] French Immersion is a highly successful approach to second language learning – an effective way for children to achieve linguistic competence in French and English, while achieving all of the educational and social outcomes of the English program.

In Manitoba, the French Immersion Program has been recognized since 1995 as an official program by the Department of Education and Training. A *Curriculum Policy for the French Immersion Program* was adopted in 1996 and updated in 1999.

Success in the program depends on many variables, including an aptitude for learning languages and the amount/intensity of time spent studying in French. Students whose French Immersion experience includes extracurricular activities will do best in French Immersion. These include listening to the radio and watching television, personal reading and writing, French camps and exchanges. Parental involvement and encouragement are tremendously important to the academic success of all children. French Immersion students are no exception.

Graduates from French Immersion receive essentially the same education as their peers in English language schools, with the added benefit of having a second language.

Notes

1 *Curriculum Policy for the French Immersion Program*, Manitoba Education and Training, 1996, p. 3

2 Ibid. p 4

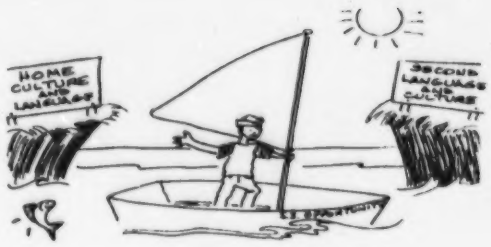
1.2 The Importance of French Immersion

Children who speak both official languages have the best of both worlds. With globalization, advances in technology, migration trends and the growth of knowledge-based industries, the world is becoming increasingly interconnected and interdependent. Today, the need and the advantages of speaking more than one language is continuously expanding. Responding in part to the growing demands for a well trained multilingual, multiliterate and multicultural workforce, French Immersion provides public school education an added dimension.

French Immersion's role in preparing our Canadian youth with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and mobility needed to meet the challenges of the global, knowledge-based society, and economy of the 21st century is significant. Canada's traditional trade patterns and corridors have expanded to include a need for a "languages trade corridor". [1]

French is used by more than 55 countries in the world, spoken by more than 250 million people, representing one quarter of the countries in the United Nations.[2] It is widely spoken on five continents and in many countries as a first language, language of instruction, language of government, business and trade. It is among the principle languages of diplomacy and important international organizations including the G7, NATO, La Francophonie, the Commonwealth and the Olympic Movement. It is of little wonder, therefore, that French Immersion provides our youth an important "21st century asset" and to use the words of His Excellency John Ralston Saul, it gives them "an invaluable added strength in life".[3]

A more personal advantage of second language study is the ability to resist stereotyping, both intellectually and personally. In comparison to students who speak only one language, second language students are better able to develop strategies for assessing human behaviour and separating it from language and cultural stereotyping. They are also better able to appreciate their own



individuality and thus resist excessive pressure to conform.[4] The French Immersion experience can lead them to the richness of bilingual and bicultural thinking.

Back in 1992, Tom Sloan cited Jan W. Walls of Simon Fraser University when he wrote: "In an age when cross-cultural and interlingual communication and cooperation have become more the norm than the exception, there is no reason to institutionalize monolingual, monocultural education as the only option available [to students]."[5] For children, learning language is something they know how to do innately[6] and French Immersion supports the holistic development of the language instinct with which all children are born. This "gentle" and "natural" approach to language acquisition and learning is more than just about learning words, it becomes a way of life and of working which provides students the opportunity to live the language and acquire the ability to negotiate and navigate between two or more languages and cultures.

"Children who speak both official languages have the best of both worlds."

Regardless how people earn a living, it is important to be able to think and express thoughts clearly. Learning French as a second language improves writing and thinking skills. The process has important benefits for first language skills as well as promoting facility in the second language. The German poet and philosopher Johanne Wolfgang Goethe once stated that he who ▷

does not know another language does not truly know his own. "Several studies indicate that individuals who learn a second language are more creative and better at solving complex problems than those who do not."[7] Other studies correlate bilingual proficiency with higher scores on standardized tests and tests of both verbal and nonverbal intelligence.[8] Students who learn second languages in the elementary and preschool years have a higher level of success in other studies and they acquire a natural template for learning other languages.

Knowing a second language can enhance the quality of life for those who have chosen to learn more than one language. Not only do they gain a better understanding of who they are, but they also have broader access to drama, cinema, literature, films, and music from other countries. The opportunity to experience literature, films, and music from many francophone countries in their original form is cited as one of the personal benefits of learning a second language, by the Yellowknife Education District, Northwest Territories.[9]

Knowing a second, third or even fourth language often results in increased level of self-esteem. Miranda Burns, an Immersion student, put it this way: "There are many practical reasons why a second language is needed in the world today, but one of the best is that it improves the way you think about yourself".[10]

Learning a language is far more than an intellectual, cognitive challenge. It is a means of growing and maturing through the experience of other cultures. It gives breadth and depth to our personalities. It allows us to approach problems differently because we have experienced different worlds; it allows us, as Proust says, "to see with new eyes." Learning French as a second language is a means of personal enrichment, which gives the learner a broader vision of life.

Dr. Roseann Runte, President of Victoria University, describes the French Immersion experience as a success in creating sensitive people, creative thinkers and excellent communicators.[11] Accordingly, learning French is an intellectual exercise for the brain which gives students the ability to discover new ideas, new thoughts and to look at things from another perspective. It gives students an ability to understand other people by learning how to put themselves in somebody else's shoes. Learning French helps students understand themselves and to strengthen their own identity by allowing them to step outside of the constraints of individual experiences limited by the one language and one culture. Dr. Runte tells us that French Immersion is about discovering a new world and about going beyond. That new world will certainly be one where ideas, knowledge and communication will be currency.[12] French Immersion education, thus, can be one of the greatest gifts parents can give their children.

Notes

1 Pidruchney, Bill "The Language of Trade", Edmontonianis, February, 1999

2 Tardif, Dr. Claudette, "French Immersion & Post-Secondary Institutions: Making the Link." Presentation regarding the Building The Future: Leading the Way Conference, Alberta, May, 2000

3 Saul, John Ralston, Canadian Parents for French National News, Winter 2000

4 Netten, Joan, "Our Children and their Future: The Value of French", December 1994

5 Sloan, Tom, "Multi-lingualism Means Business", Language, Economy, Society, Winter, 1992

6 *Help your child with a Foreign Language*. Opal Dunn, Berlitz Publishing Compagny Inc., Princeton, 1998, pp. 38 – 40

7 "Promoting a Language Proficient Society", a digest prepared by Kathleen M. Marcos and Joy Kreeft Payton, for the Centre for Applied Linguistics, April 2000, quoting from a study by Bamford and Mizokawa, 1991

8 Glisan, Eileen, quoted in "Learning a Language", Jennifer Reid Holman, in *Better Homes and Gardens*, January 1998

9 French Programs: Yellowknife Education District #1, Northwest Territories, 2000

10 Miranda Burns, in her entry for the "Proud of Two Languages" essay contest, 1998

11 Runte, Dr. Roseann, "French Immersion: So Much More than a Language!", Keynote address at Building the Future: Leading the Way Conference, Alberta, May, 2000

12 Ibid

1.3 Brain Research on Learning French in Early Childhood

Why learn French starting in Kindergarten or Grade 1? Why not leave learning a second language until later in the child's school years, when English has been thoroughly learned?

In recent years, considerable emphasis has been placed on brain research as it relates to learning in young children. Brain research has shown that there is a definite "window of opportunity" for learning languages. It is open at its widest at age seven and under.[1] At this age and stage of brain or neural development, children are most receptive to learning a new language. Research has also shown that children under age seven have a better chance of having accurate pronunciation than children who learn the language after the age of ten. "From both a practical teaching standpoint as well as the latest research, we now know the better learner is one who starts early — at least before age 10".[2]

Children after the age of ten will learn the language, but the subtle differences in sounds, particularly of vowels, are not differentiated as easily at that age. Therefore, children in Kindergarten or even Pre-Kindergarten have greater ease in learning languages. The linguistics professor and researcher Susan Curtiss says that: "The power to learn language is so great in the young child that it doesn't seem to matter how many languages you throw their way. They can learn as many as you allow them to hear systematically and regularly at the same time."[3]

The scientific basis for this age-related learning readiness is found in the part of the brain known as Broca's Area. One study compared the brain activity of two groups: people who had learned two languages or more in early childhood and people who had learned

the languages between ages 11 and 19. A child learning two or more languages in early childhood learns them more or less at the same time (this is known as simultaneous bilingualism) and the neural connections are stored in the same area of the brain. A person learning a language later in life creates a second and separate neural language centre in the brain. This might account for the difficulty adults face in learning a language after the "window" has closed.[4] While children in French Immersion are starting to learn French after English, they are learning them close enough together to form connections.

Notes

1 *How the Brain Learns*, 2nd Edition, David A. Sousa, Corwin Press Thousand Oaks, California, p. 201, 2001.

2 Ibid.

3 Susan Curtiss, Linguistics professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, 1998

4 Ibid.

1.4 Language Development

Children proceed from understanding no French to mimicking and repeating the teacher's words to using English sentences with French words thrown in. At this stage, French is interspersed with some English. By mid-grade 1, children are able to use French sentences. In effect, they are learning language by using language.[1]

During the language learning process, the teacher plans learning situations to add more complex vocabulary. As the child's vocabulary increases, the teacher is also modelling proper usage. For instance, if the child says something incorrectly, the teacher will generally repeat it, using an appropriate expression or perhaps suggesting a different way of saying it. If the child's pronunciation is incorrect, the teacher will repeat with the correct pronunciation. Students are encouraged to use French as much as they can. They are given positive encouragement to try out their new language. When they take risks and make mistakes, the teacher uses repetition and modelling to teach appropriate usage.

There is very little translation in French immersion. The teacher does not say "This is a cat. In French, it is *un chat*." Rather, the teacher will read a story, showing pictures and talking about the animal in the pictures as "*un chat*" and the children naturally associate the animal with the word. They may not be able to tell you "In French you call a cat, *un chat*", but if you show them a picture, they will probably say that their teacher calls it "*un chat*." They have acquired two labels for that animal, one in each language, one for home and one for school. Language learning proceeds naturally in an upward spiral.

Having acquired many comprehension skills in listening and reading, the children will develop speaking and writing competencies. These production skills take longer to develop. It should be noted however, that the language of instruction is at a level to promote comprehension and to foster new knowledge of French. When students use the French language to study Math and Science, they are developing their competence in French as well as developing the many dimensions of numeracy and scientific literacy.

There is very little translation in French Immersion.

By the Middle Years, students are producing French explanations, stories, poems and plays and expanding their knowledge of grammar and syntax. In Middle and Senior Years, they read more and a greater variety of French texts, study drama and poetry, view films and videos, as well as listen to music, all of which expand their experience with the language and French culture. In Senior Years, students sharpen their ability to analyse and critique various texts. They write purposeful pieces, which reflect this heightened comprehension.[2]

Just as the development of English in all its correct forms and breadth of vocabulary takes many years, the development of language skills in French takes more than just a few years in elementary school. Students who continue in the program until the end of high school will have had the opportunity to develop the best language skills possible.

Notes

1 *French Immersion: Qu'est-ce que c'est?* Bureau de l'éducation française Division of Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 1988

2 *Curriculum Policy for the French Immersion Program*, 1996, states that the students in Senior 1 to 4 French Immersion must obtain a credit in Français Language Arts, at each grade level.

2. French Immersion: A Canadian Success Story

A Brief History

French Immersion is the most studied, discussed and documented language acquisition program in our history. It is an educational phenomenon that several other countries have adopted.[1] More than one thousand studies have been done on French Immersion since its inception in the 1960s. According to the Canadian Education Association: "No educational program has been so intensively researched and evaluated in Canada as has French Immersion. The effects of the program on the acquisition of French-language as well as English-language skills and the academic achievement of French Immersion students have been well documented. Research shows that the program works."[2] All these studies are documented in educational journals and on various sites on the Internet.

In the 1960s, English-speaking parents in Quebec, notably in the Montreal suburbs, were concerned that their children were not learning enough French. Although the children lived in a centre of francophone commerce and culture, they were only studying French for a small part of their school day and were not learning French as quickly or as well as their parents wished they could. Parents were concerned that their children were not going to be able to take advantage of the economic opportunities offered to bilingual individuals. Another concern was that they were unable to share in the cultural life of their home city, because they could not speak French.

In 1965, a French Immersion kindergarten in an English-speaking public school, was set up in the St. Lambert suburb of Montreal. It later became the best-known French Immersion experiment. A similar trial had already been started in Quebec in 1958 at the English-language West Island Schools Commission with a class of 18 students. Another duplicate program was set up in the private Toronto French school in 1962. Within a few years, the news of the success of the Immersion phenomenon spread to other provinces and parents were asking school boards to provide French Immersion programming. French Immersion reached Manitoba in the 1970's.

A major change in language education came about in 1969, with the passing of the Official Languages Act making Canada's federal civil service bilingual. Suddenly, there was a demand for French second language programs for adults. Consequently French Immersion for their children became an ever-expanding program of studies. Canada was officially bilingual but the number of bilingual English first-language federal workers was relatively small.

A groundbreaking change in language education came about when the Charter of Rights and Freedoms guaranteed language and language education rights to all Canadians, in both official languages. It paved the way for access to programs for all who wished to be educated in French, whether they be French first language or French immersion programs. Now, largely due to parental influence on local school divisions to provide French Immersion, there are kindergarten to Senior 4 programs in all provinces and territories.[3] Graduates of the French Immersion program are emerging as a whole new generation of bilingual Canadians.[4] ▷

To fund the new first and second language programs, the Official Languages in Education Program was established in 1983, giving federal funding to the provinces. This funding was meant to help them establish programs and support services for students, paying the extra costs to the school division of establishing and maintaining a French Immersion program and Basic French courses. Today, this funding remains in Manitoba, covering approximately 50% of the support to French second language education. The other 50% is provided by the provincial government.

By the mid 1980's, the provinces and federal government were working together to create opportunities to learn French as a second language and a protocol was signed between them, establishing ground rules for the use of the funds.[5]

French Immersion started in Manitoba in the 1970s, when the first French Immersion classes were established in St. Boniface School Division # 4 and Winnipeg School Division # 1. In 1973, there were 216 students enrolled in Immersion at École Sacre-Coeur. There are now Immersion programs in twenty-four Manitoba school divisions, with more than 17,000 students in Kindergarten to Senior 4 classes in Manitoba public schools.[6]

Since 1995, French Immersion has been a recognized program of instruction. It is subject to the same regulations and has the same curriculum development and program support systems as the English and French first-language programs. In September 1996, Manitoba became the first province in Canada to adopt a *Curriculum Policy for the French Immersion Program.* This policy document was updated in February 1999. The Curriculum Policy document sets out the expectations for the program, as well as time-on-task for language learning and course credit requirements for graduation.[7]

The *Curriculum Policy for the French Immersion Program* also states in the Foreword: "Choosing to enrol in a French Immersion Program adds a language enrichment component to the training of young people. This phenomenon will contribute to their success in today's world and the world of the future, a world marked by rapid change on the social, economic and intellectual fronts, a world dominated by information technology and the global market".[8]

Children in French Immersion classes reflect the linguistic and cultural mosaic of Canada. Children in French Immersion come from families whose heritage language may be Chinese, Japanese, German, Ukrainian, one of the First Nations languages as well as English. Canadians recognize the excellence of the program for language learning, as well as the English language arts component, which makes it possible for their children to have skills in both official languages. "As a country of immigrants, Canada is also a country of languages. The more we exploit that advantage, the better we are likely to do in selling our goods and services to the world".[9]

In September 1996, Manitoba became the first province in Canada to adopt a Curriculum Policy for the French Immersion Program.

Notes

1 Finland, Australia, Sweden, the United States, Japan, Nigeria, Spain and Italy have all instituted Immersion programs for language acquisition.

2 [French Immersion] "Information Note" Canadian Education Association, August 1992

3 Information about French Immersion and Extended Core French Programs across Canada is available in the Guide to French Immersion and Extended Core French Programs, Canadian Parents for French, 2001, www.cpf.ca

4 Statistics Canada, Census figures of 1996, showed an increase of 15–19 year-olds who were bilingual from 9.9% in 1981 to 18% in 1996.

5 *Funding Guidelines for French-language Programs*, Manitoba Education and Training, Manitoba, 2000

6 Enrolment statistics of French Immersion Schools in Manitoba, 2000

7 *Curriculum Policy for the French Immersion Program*, Manitoba Education and Training, February 1999.

8 Ibid. p.vii

9 Cole, Brian "*The Power of Language*" editorial in the Winnipeg Free Press, September 15, 1996

3. French Immersion in Manitoba

3.1 The Program

3.1.1 Introduction

French Immersion is an officially recognized program of studies in the Manitoba public school system. In terms of courses of study and levels of achievement, it has essentially the same graduation requirements as the English program[1]. Its goal is to develop functional bilingualism in children whose first language is not French.[2]

The curricula, developed by the Bureau de l'éducation française, a Division of the Department of Education, Training and Youth, are congruent, in content and learning outcomes, with those taught in English.
In keeping with peers in the English program, children acquire "academic, social, and career skills, and the life management skills that future citizens will need to develop their individual potential".[3] While some of the teaching strategies are necessarily different from those in a first-language program, students acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes similar to those of their counterparts. The difference is that graduates from French Immersion are able to communicate in both English and French.

Teachers in French Immersion receive their training in the faculties of Education from various universities across the nation and internationally. All speak French and many have learned French as a second language learner in a French Immersion program.

3.1.2 Time in French

The achievement of second-language proficiency, is related to the amount/intensity of time the students spend learning and using the language. The table which follows, indicates the percentage of the school day a child spends in classes taught in French in Manitoba.

Kindergarten	**100% of the time**
Grades 1 to 6	**75- 80% of the time**
Grades 7 to Senior 4	**50- 80% of the time**

Students who take more subjects in French tend to have greater proficiency in French language skills than those who take only a few courses.[4] Not only do they study the language as a subject, but French is also the language of instruction to teach the skills, concepts and content of Mathematics, Science and other subjects.[5] In so doing, students further develop their French language skills in both oral and written expression.

3.1.3 Entry Points

Early Immersion

An Immersion program that starts in Kindergarten or Grade 1 and continues until Senior 4 is called "Early Immersion". The majority of French Immersion students enter the program in Kindergarten.

Some school divisions have provided the need for earlier language acquisition opportunities and provide a pre-kindergarten or nursery program in French.[6]

There are two other recognized entry points to the program: grades 4 and 7.

Middle Immersion

In the growth period of French Immersion in Manitoba, several school divisions offered a Grade 4 entry point. As the success of Early Immersion became known, Middle Immersion became less popular.[7] In 2002, there are no schools where this option is available in this province. However, it can be an option where numbers warrant it and at the parents' request.

"Graduates from French Immersion are able to communicate in both English and French."

Late Immersion

Late Immersion provides an entry point for students who want to achieve functional bilingualism, but who missed or chose not to take the early a middle entry point in Kindergarten, Grade 1 or Grade 4. It generally begins in Grade 7.[8]

Students who start French Immersion in Grade 7, will have a period of very intense language training. They then follow much the same curriculum as other students in immersion. It is advantageous to have as many as possible of their courses in French in order to expand their use of the language.

Although students are not pre-selected for Late Immersion, motivation is an important factor in their success. Students acquire basic language skills, and then begin to use French as the language of study for other subjects.

3.1.4 School Types

There are three different organizational models for French Immersion schools. Regardless of what kind of model is adopted by the school, all communication with the parents is in English.[9]

Immersion School

If there is only French Immersion in a school, then the school is called an Immersion School, a Milieu School or a Single-Track School. All the staff speak French. Announcements and school activities are in French.

The students spend 25% of their school day learning English Language Arts. All other subjects are in French.

Immersion Centre

If there is a single wing, a floor or other part of the school that houses only French Immersion students, that part of the building is called a French Immersion Centre. Conditions similar to an Immersion or Milieu School are maintained.[10] Often this part of the school will have its own administrative office, with a French-speaking administrator. All the staff in that section speak French and French is the language used for announcements and school activities. It may be that students must leave the centre for subjects that are not studied in French, or for course options that they share with English program students. As many as possible of the students' courses are taken in French.

Dual-Track School

This type of school has a central administrative office responsible for both programs, the French Immersion program and the English program.

Regardless of what kind of model is adopted by the school, all communication with the parents is in English

The students may be grouped as a program, with all the French Immersion classes in one area of the school. This arrangement encourages opportunities for French to be spoken in the hallways. Classroom teachers are fluent in French and English. Ideally, all services to students are available in French. Announcements, field trips, and school-wide activities may be in French or in English.

"Creating a French environment in a dual-track setting is of great importance and requires active support and fostering of the use of French inside and outside the classroom".[11]

Notes

1 *Curriculum Policy for the French Immersion Program*, Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 1999 p. 11-13

2 Ibid. p. 4

3 *Renewing Education: A Foundation for Excellence*, Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 1995, p. 6

4 Halsall, N., French Immersion Update, Carleton Board of Education, 1994

5 *Curriculum Policy for the French Immersion Program*, Manitoba Education Training and Youth, 1999, p. 5

6 École LaVérendrye, École Sacré-Coeur and École Lansdowne of the Winnipeg School Division have Nursery programs available in French

7 *Curriculum Policy for the French Immersion Program*, Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 1999 p. 12

8 At the time of publication, Grade 7 Entry is available in the Winnipeg School Division and River East School Division.

9 *Curriculum Policy for the French Immersion Program*, Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 1999 p. 14

10 Ibid

11 *Curriculum Policy for the French Immersion Program*, Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 1999 p. 15

3.2 From Kindergarten to Senior 4

3.2.1 Kindergarten: The First Steps in the Language Adventure

One important purpose of Kindergarten is to initiate the children to the sounds of the French language. The teacher speaks French so that the children begin to recognize sounds and words and start using them.[1]

Won't this confuse the children? John Lamb, a former French Immersion Principal, says that five-year-olds are used to hearing adults use words they don't understand, so it comes as no surprise to them when their teacher does it. They seem to be remarkably tolerant of new words. In fact, researchers Sandra Weber and Claudette Tardif say, "Not understanding the teacher's language seemed to be only a minor nuisance to the children".[2] What does happen, though, is that children start paying close attention to the way the teachers speak and they search for clues to the meaning. French Immersion Kindergarten teachers use many strategies to convey meaning to their use of French: body language, gestures, expressive tone, visual supports, and repetition. This communicative approach is conducive to second language aquisition and learning. The children may not understand every word the teachers use, but they understand what is meant and what they are supposed to do.

Immersion Kindergarten has structured times, in that there are certain words and phrases that the children hear accompanied by certain actions. For example, the teachers start the day by greeting the class with "Bonjour", smiling and nodding as if in greeting. Soon one of the children will respond: "Bonjour" making the connection between the word and the occasion. The teachers react by clapping their hands and saying "Oui, oui, bonjour!"

The child's classmates see the positive reaction exhibited by the teachers and will mimic *"Bonjour"*, too. After a day or two, every child knows that you say *"Bonjour"* when you meet someone. Repetition, encouragement and positive reinforcement are useful teaching strategies in the second language class.

School day routines allow children to associate words with specific times and daily events. For instance, *"goûter"* means you eat your snack; *"gymnase"* means you go play in the gym; *"au revoir, mes amis"* means you go home. In the safe and caring environment of the Kindergarten class, children anticipate or predict meaning and verify their hypotheses continuously throughout the day.

French Immersion Kindergarten teachers use many strategies to convey meaning to their use of French: body language, gestures, expressive tone, visual supports, and repetition.

An integrated approach to teach the second language is used. Teachers choose themes from children's interests, other subject matters, the community or the natural environment. They teach songs, games and poems. Sooner or later, depending on individual differences, children will begin to use the words that the teacher has introduced. Some hesitantly whisper a word or two; some take bigger risks and imitate phrases; others wait until they have enough confidence to say a whole sentence before they venture to use French. The teacher encourages them, modeling the correct pronunciation or combination of words.

French Immersion Kindergarten is described as "total" or "100%" French,[3] because after a brief transition period, the teacher speaks only French, unless there is an emergency or a need for emotional support. For some time, the children speak to the teacher and to each other in English. To a parent visiting the classroom, it may sound a little odd, hearing one person speaking French ▷

and the students, obviously understanding some of what the teacher says, responding in English. They are experiencing the language and learning to distinguish its sounds and the meanings they represent. This is known as comprehensible input. As the children progress in acquiring the language, they also use it more to communicate.

Specific outcomes are identified for the different subjects in the Kindergarten curriculum. In Mathematics, children will have many opportunities to use their reasoning skills. They will solve problems, communicate mathematical ideas and learn to value mathematics.

In the sciences, children will study the world we live in. Through concrete explorations, they will develop research skills and attitudes of curiosity and respect for the world which surrounds them.

Literacy skills are introduced and developed to help prepare the children for formal reading instruction. During storytelling, they will be encouraged to use the positive strategies of prediction, confirmation and integration of new information.

Throughout their first year in French immersion, the children are learning what every other child learns in Kindergarten: sharing, waiting their turn, cutting and pasting... to name but a few.

Parents, former students and teachers with current and past experience in French Immersion report that students adapt readily to this new and exciting environment of second language learning.

3.2.2 Early Years

The emphasis on the development of oral language in French continues throughout the early years with the addition of new outcomes related to all aspects of language learning. Children learn to read in English in Grade 1. In Grade 2, children begin formal reading instruction in French.

In the St.Boniface School Division, children learn to read in French in Grade 1 and in English in Grade 2. This is the general practice in French Immersion across the country.

In Grade 1, they will start using French to communicate their needs, ask questions and to describe their world.

The Early Years part of the program is a continuum of learning. As their knowledge of the second language expands, children progress from simple utterances like *"Merci"* and *"Bonjour"* to a greater level of proficiency and fluency in French. In Grade 1, they will start using French to communicate their needs, ask questions and to describe their world. By Grade 2, with a greater vocabulary base and new expressions, they start to use more complex structures. They read stories and start to write in French as well.

Every grade level has learning outcomes that guide the students' progress. Assessment by the teacher will show their level of achievement in the new language, as well as their achievement in the different subject matters including English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Music and Physical Education. In all subjects, except English Language Arts, French is the language of instruction. In the Français class, French becomes the focus or subject of instruction.

"Students learn the language mainly through practice in three means of communication: oral, written and viewing".[4] By the time the children complete Early Years, speaking, reading and writing both French and English are natural parts of their school life. They have acquired a variety of grammatical forms. They can read, interpret and answer questions about audio, visual or written materials in French or in English. They are on their way to being bilingual. Students make use of French to "meet their educational, personal, and social needs".[5]

3.2.3 Middle Years

Students between Grade 5 and 8 are called middle years learners. That is the transition time between early years and senior years (formerly called high school). They continue to develop socially, physically and intellectually, and it is a time of great change. Great individual differences in students' physical, mental and emotional growth appear. All the children are progressing towards maturity at their own individual pace. They are emerging from childhood and moving towards adulthood, learning to cope with social pressures, higher expectations and increased responsibilities.

Children are able to write in French, to articulate oral and written explanations to questions, to solve written Math problems and they have a fairly wide vocabulary in the areas studied in class.

From Middle Years onwards, students continue to:

- expand their knowledge of specific subject areas;
- expand their vocabulary;
- develop their grammar and writing skills;
- increase their confidence in their language skills;
- increase their appreciation of French culture;
- be exposed to an increasing number of language models;
- be involved in many different learning and language situations;
- be provided opportunities for their increased independence;
- have their creativity challenged.

At the same time, the students continue to learn English. They have the same outcomes as the students in the English program. They work towards becoming responsible, self-disciplined and reflective learners in a cooperative learning environment, which includes mastering technologies.

In Middle Years, children also continue to use the French language as a vehicle to study subjects like Science, Social Studies, Music, Physical Education and Mathematics. Expectations increase. Students consult French reference tools like dictionaries, encyclopedias and search engines. They read and interpret stories and novels. They write their own stories, which demonstrate a prescribed level of grammatical expertise.

At the same time, the students continue to learn English as their peers in the English program, master technology, become responsible and self disciplined, and function in a cooperative learning environment.

Many schools offer new course options to their middle years students. These may include band, visual art, performing arts, home economics, industrial arts, computer applications and even a third language.

For students and parents who have missed the early entry to Immersion, this might be a time to consider the Late Immersion option. They might be looking for an alternative program, a new challenge and a new language choice. Late Entry French Immersion would provide the students all of these while allowing them to pursue the same academic outcomes as the English program.

3.2.4 Senior Years

Senior Years programs in French Immersion are found in most divisions offering French Immersion, although the number of course options vary. To graduate with a provincial French Immersion diploma, students need to have accumulated a minimum of fourteen credits from courses taken in French.[7] The Français course at each Senior level is mandatory. The other course requirements ▷

are English Language Arts at every grade level, and a Mathematics course in Senior 4, which can be obtained from a course delivered in French or English. The last two requirements are necessary for high school graduation from all programs in the province. For added details, see the appendix.

The Senior Years French Immersion program will serve to:

- increase the students competence in French by offering a variety of courses in language-rich areas
- deepen their appreciation of the French language and cultures
- promote academic achievement and expand their knowledge in many different subject areas
- develop their skill in the use of technology
- encourage the development of their intellectual maturity while providing the opportunity to pursue independent studies in French
- sustain their social development
- give students the opportunity to develop to their full potential as members of the community

Ideally the program will be offering at least 50% of instructional time in French, including courses in each semester. In addition to compulsory courses, Drama, Physical Education, Computer Sciences, Practical Arts, Accounting, Music and Band options are courses that can also be offered in French. These choices allow students to pursue their own interests in an individualized study program.

The number and the type of courses offered usually depend on the number of students selecting them. While it may be difficult for a school division to offer some courses in French because of limited enrollment, special adaptations and arrangements can sometimes be made at the school level to help the students obtain the credits they need.

Schools provide the students with tools and resources to succeed in their studies. French reference and research materials, audiovisual materials, computer software, textbooks and supplementary materials in addition to the support services combine to provide a solid base for learning, growing and preparing for post-secondary studies.

Students who graduate from French Immersion will leave their Senior Years with good language skills in both language and a solid academic foundation. They can proceed to study in French at the post-secondary level, live in a French community, work in a French language environment or attend post-secondary studies in English.

3.2.5 English in French Immersion Classes

French Immersion students in Manitoba learn to read in English in Grade 1, then in French, in Grade 2.[8] This differs from the way French Immersion programs are structured in most other Canadian provinces.[9] From Grade 1 onwards, English is taught during 25% of their school day. In some school divisions, the number of courses taken in English increases as the children progress through the middle and senior years. English reading is introduced in Grade 1, taking advantage of the fact that they have already developed a broader vocabulary in English than in French.[10]

"The French Immersion teaching strategies take advantage of the fact the child is learning about language in two different ways in English and French".

The English Language Arts–Immersion curriculum has the same language arts outcomes as the one used in the ▷

English program. They include six broad categories including speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and representing. The French Immersion teaching strategies take advantage of the fact the child is learning about language in two different ways, in English and French. The child is in effect getting a double exposure to grammar, spelling, organization, reading, speaking, writing and learning strategies.

The similarities between the two languages allow for transfers to occur. For example, both English and French are written and read from left to right and from top to bottom on a page. The skills for doing rapid reading or skimming are the same whether in English or in French.

Sharon Lapkin and Merrill Swain, researchers in French Immersion have conducted many studies of learning mechanisms in language acquisition. They stated as early as 1984: "It seems clear that once literacy skills are well established in one language, they transfer readily and rapidly to the other language."[11] Skills and learning strategies that are the same in both languages mean that what a child learns in English is readily transferred to French, and vice versa.

Unique characteristics in both French and English sometimes create confusion between the two different languages in the early years. This confusion is called interference. Your child may spell English words "the French way" or use English word order in French. Words that are similar in French and English may be interchanged in writing and the child might confuse them in speech. With regards to the alphabet, it is only certain specific letter names that sometimes cause interference: e, i, g, j.

The English Language Arts–Immersion curriculum has identified and listed transfers and interferences so teachers can capitalize on the former and correct the latter.[12] Research shows that children in French Immersion may develop at a different rate than their peers in the English program in the mechanics of writing, such as spelling and capitalization. Although short lived, this normal developmental lag can cause undue concern for parents of Early Years children. Research and our experience have shown however, that by the time they reach Grades 5 or 6, most French Immersion students equal or out perform their peers in the English program in most aspects of English Language Arts including writing and articulating skills.[13]

3.2.6 Mathematics and Science

Throughout the Early and Middle years of schooling, students in French Immersion study Mathematics and Science in French. These two subjects contribute enormously to the language development and increased vocabulary of the pupils. Some parents believe however, that it would be better to study these subjects in English as they reach their senior years and prepare for university.

This idea is not new. The myth about English being the better language for the teaching of Mathematics and Science has been dismantled numerous times but it returns with every generation of new arrivals in the French Immersion Senior Years. Two surveys of Manitoba French Immersion graduates in 1991 and 2002 looked at the issue of transition between senior years courses taken in French and University courses taken in English.[14] The vast majority reported few major difficulties with the transition to Math and Science courses taken in English at the university level. Where difficulties existed, they related to vocabulary and terminology, and not to concepts.[15] ▷

"These two subjects contribute enormously to the language development and increased vocabulary of the pupils"

Some comments graduates made about the issue of transition from French courses in senior years to University courses in English are:
"I can't stress enough that the transition to English courses was no problem whatsoever."[16] "...Just recognizing terms in English that I learned in French, but the knowledge was there."[17]

Monique Bournot-Trites and Kenneth Reeder recently studied the effects of teaching Mathematics in French on mathematics achievement evaluated in English. Their study focused mainly on middle years pupils. They concluded: "This study found that increasing the intensity of French in a French immersion program by teaching Math in French is strongly associated with a positive effect on mathematics achievement evaluated in English."[18]

The Science Council of Canada states that the aim of a science education program is to :

- develop citizens able to participate fully in the political and social choices facing a technological society;
- train those with special interest in Science and technology fields for further study;
- provide an appropriate preparation for the modern work world;
- stimulate intellectual and moral growth to help students develop into rational, autonomous individuals.[19]

In French Immersion schools, these objectives are reached in the French language.

Notes

1 Elaine Krawchenko, former Kindergarten teacher, in a presentation to parents, May 1999

2 Weber, Sandra and Claudette Tardif, "A Young Child's View of Starting French Immersion" *So You Want Your Child to Learn French*, Canadian Parents for French, 1990

3 *Curriculum Policy for the French Immersion Program*, Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 1999, p. 9

4 Ibid. p. 7

5 Ibid. p. 7

6 Available in Winnipeg and River East school divisions in 2001.

7 *Curriculum Policy for the French Immersion Program*, Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 1999, p. 10, 11, 12
4 credits in S1, 4 credits in S2, 3 credits in S3, 3 credits in S4

8 In the St. Boniface School Division the inverse is true.

9 English Language Arts, including formal instruction in English language reading, are introduced in Grade 2 or later, up to Grade 4, in other provinces. There appears to be little difference between the English reading skills of children who learned to read in English first, or in French. Introducing *English Language Arts in Early French Immersion*, Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers,1995, p. ii

10 *English Language Arts in Early French Immersion*, Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers Special Report (Executive Summary)1995, p. I

11 Lapkin, Sharon and Merrill Swain, "Research Update" Language and Society, Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages Winter, 1984, p. 50

12 *Grades 1 to 4 English LA – Immersion*
ManitobaCurriculum Framework of Outcomes and Grade 3 Standards, 1997, p. 31.
Grades 5 to 8 English LA – Immersion
ManitobaCurriculum Framework of Outcomes and Grade 6 Standards, 1997, p. 85.

13 *Yes, You Can Help: Information and Inspiration for French Immersion Parents*, Alberta Education, 1997, p. 35

14 *Follow-up Study of French Immersion Graduates*, Manitoba Education and Training, 1991

14 *Survey of 1998 and 1999 Manitoba French Immersion Graduates*, Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 2002

15 Ibid p. 53

16 Ibid. p. 48

17 Ibid. p. 52

18 The Canadian Modern Language Review, *Interdependence Revisited, 2001, p. 40*

19 *Science for Every Student : Educating Canadians for Tomorrow's World*, Science Council of Canada, 1984

4. French Immersion: An Opportunity for All Children

4.1 The Struggling Learner

Children learn in different ways and at different rates and teachers do support them as individuals, regardless of program or language of instruction. It is understood that not all students will reach the same level of achievement at the same rate and the same time, but rather that all students will be challenged to reach their maximum potential. "Students who have learning disabilities or special academic needs can succeed in French Immersion programs just as well as they could in the English program, all things being equal. When students with learning disabilities do succeed in the Immersion program, it gives them self-confidence that carries over into other subject areas. In the long run, they do better in school, partly for psychological reasons".[1]

In many cases, when thinking about a possible transfer, parents assume that children with learning difficulties will get better grades and have fewer problems in the English program. In most cases, the transfer results in no change in the children's behaviour or in their academic success. In a Manitoba Learning Disability Association presentation, Demers (1994) stated that sometimes, the loss of self-esteem and the disruption of the children's peer grouping may cause a worsening of the problem. He goes on to remind us that any decision to change the placement of a child must be made in the interest of the child – not of the program, the parents or the teachers.[2] Further to this issue, Martha Crago from McGill University stated that there is no reason to assume that children with language disorders cannot learn a second language or be bilingual.[3]

Most learning difficulties are not language-specific. Likewise, behavioural or social challenges have nothing to do with the language of instruction. Once the children have acquired learning strategies to overcome their difficulties, they use these strategies in an English or French language situation. It is usually preferable to provide assistance in the language of instruction. As the need arises, teachers work in collaboration with School and Divisional Support Services who have knowledge and training in second language teaching and learning. Together and in partnership with the child, the parents and external agencies if necessary can develop Individual Educational Plans, which help the child transfer learning strategies from one language to another.

A child experiencing difficulties due to interference or lack of transference between the two languages may be experiencing a natural delay or lag in second language development. Learning disorders do not go away because the language is English instead of French. They are not caused by French Immersion, any more than they are caused by the English program and they most likely cannot be solved by simply changing the language of instruction.

Hearing problems may make it difficult for a child to learn in French Immersion but it is not impossible. The first step in learning a language is hearing and imitating the sounds. Hearing-impaired children may find it frustrating not being able to hear clearly what the teacher and their classmates are saying. Assistance for many hearing-impaired children has been found in modern wireless technology: a microphone for the teacher and a receiver for the child. This device filters out extraneous noise and it helps to clarify and amplify the teacher's voice. A specialist who is trained in speech therapy is an important asset to the support services team assisting hearing-impaired children in French Immersion, as would be the case in the English program.

While some difficulties are relatively straightforward, others can be complex and multi-faceted. The solution▶

lies in the early and correct diagnosis of the problem and the development of an Individual Education Plan created to address the difficulty and support the child in a respectful learning environment which is conducive to second language learning. Many learning disabilities require a team approach comprised of the child, parents, teachers and other human resources (school, divisional, community). As in any learning situation, the best programs use a variety of teaching and assessment strategies which respect different learning styles and intelligences and emphasizes individual progress.

Depending on the learning difficulty, the age and grade level of the child, it is possible that the major part of the student's assessment will be conducted in English. It is essential however, that the interpretation of the results be done within the context of second language development as this relates to the French Immersion classroom. Creative solutions to learning challenges in all situations and programs continue to evolve with modern technology, increased knowledge and ongoing research. The school's responsibility is to help children learn as much as they can and for almost all, that includes a second language.

Notes

1 Netten, J. (1999). Students with Learning Disabilities Can Do Well in French Immersion. *French Second Language Education: A Millenium Challenge*

2 Demers, D. (1994). Learning Disabilities and Cross-Linguistic Interference in French Immersion: When to Transfer, When Not to Transfer. *Learning Disabilities Association of Manitoba and Canadian Parents for French – Manitoba*

3 Crago, Dr. Martha (2002) "Developmental Language Impairment in a Multicultural and Multilingual Context", presentation topic at *Manitoba Speech and Hearing* Convention

4.2 The Gifted Learner

The French Immersion classroom has seen changes to its composition over the years. Although once considered for the elite and more gifted children, it has now evolved to include children with varying needs, challenges and multiple learning styles. Like the English program, it is open to and welcomes all children. Teachers accommodate all learners through program adaptations and Individual Educational Plans to ensure the opportunity of success and the development of potential for all.

Children for whom many aspects of education come easily will more than likely also develop competence in their second language. With the support from teachers, parents and school, children can develop their talents to the fullest in a French Immersion program.

Time, personal attention, resources and motivation to learn are all key elements in the development of children's potential. To have gifted children remain motivated, their unique needs have to be recognized. A classroom structured to encourage the exploration of ideas and unanswered questions allows for the study of topics that are of interest to many students, including the gifted. However, random activities that offer short term challenges, while valuable, may still not completely meet the needs of gifted learners. Teachers of gifted learners, school and divisional Support Sevices work together to articulate goals and outcomes which reflect their special abilities and needs.

French Immersion is a program for all children, of every ability, including the gifted. It encourages them to make strides towards becoming their personal best.

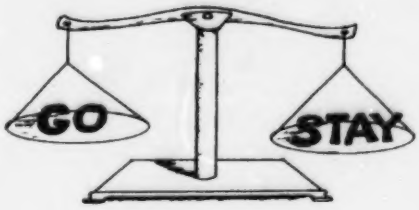
4.3 To Go or to Stay: The Big Decision

In all programs, whether French Immersion or English, Middle Years students and their parents will be faced with additional choices including those related to schools of choice, course options, and extracurricular activities. It's a time when their friends are making decisions too, and one of those choices is deciding whether or not to continue in French Immersion. For some students, the choice is sharply defined because they have to leave their neighbourhood school after Grade 6 or Grade 8. It is a time, in urban divisions, when busing provided by the school division stops for all programs[1] and students may need to consider a car pool or taking a transit bus to school.

In many families, there will be explorations about the next steps in the child's educational career. Having completed Early and Middle Years in French Immersion, children and parents may be looking for new experiences for a variety of reasons.

Parents who discuss the possibilities and options with their child are the ones who face fewer problems in the long run. Discussing the goals and plans of the child and weighing the pros and cons of continuing Immersion will help students and parents make informed decisions. Carefully examining the course offerings in the French and English programs and noting the requirements of post-secondary schools are important variables to consider.

Achievement in a second language is related to time/intensity spent studying and practicing the language. In a Senior Years program, the opportunity to broaden and deepen one's language experience exists through a variety of course options. A milieu Senior Years School typically offers the most choice for options. In a dual-track Senior Years school, many options are available in French and English. Usually, these schools offer more than enough courses taught in French to warrant the French Immersion Provincial Diploma.



Students may also consider going to a school in another school division. With Schools of choice policy in place, students can transfer to another school division, provided space is available in the destination school and the parents are willing to absorb the cost of transportation.

Many school divisions are now providing parents and students with opportunities to make informed choices by holding Open House meetings for parents and special sessions for students. To talk about their school, some divisions have teams of Senior Years students visiting Middle Years classes. Some schools have produced special presentations, information pamphlets, videos, compact disks, and DVD's promoting their Immersion program or school. In order to keep parents and students informed, it is essential that the school has the means of letting them know about course options, extracurricular activities and other distinct characteristics.

Parents who discuss the possibilities and options with their child are the ones who face fewer problems in the long run.

What happens to those students who transfer out of Immersion before Senior 4? There are no academic advantages to switching. For some students depending on the grade level and age, there may be a brief period of adjustment to new peers and new teachers. In fact, there may be a "honeymoon" period during which the student appears to do better. This is short lived however, ▷

and it becomes difficult to maintain their second language skills unless maintainance programs are available.

Students who switch are not disadvantaged in terms of academic performance or cognitive development. Some students who have been in Immersion take Spanish and Basic French and do well in both courses, thanks to their previous French Immersion experience.

Whether or not the actual time spent in Immersion ends before Senior 4, the basis of language learning is already established in the brain as a template. The connections made during those early years will be of immense use to the older student who revisits French after a break or to the one who decides to study another language.

Notes

1 Provincial transportation policy requires busing to be provided, regardless of program, for students who live more than 1.6 km from their school, but cities and towns are exempt. Transportation of French Immersion students is usually provided until Grade 6.

2 Students may be offered the choice of International Baccalaureat, Advanced Placement or French Immersion.

5. French Immersion: Beyond the Classroom

5.1 The Role of the Parent in Immersion

Today's schools are welcoming parents as never before. They are recognized as important partners in the teaching and learning process. Schools acknowledge and appreciate their contribution to the life of the school and its community of learners. Their contributions as volunteers and partners are seen as crucial to the success of school programs.

Parents work in the library, supervise lunches, provide treats, raise money, plant trees, copy newsletters and write school promotion materials. Not only have they become helpers, workers and home team supporters, but advisors as well. Parents and community members may be invited to participate in the school budget and school planning process, as members of the Advisory Council for School Leadership.[1]

Besides involvement in the school parent council, parents can be of real help in the classroom. They can be helpers in English reading class and offer assistance in French reading if they speak the language. They can participate in special classes, math clubs, and science fairs. They can also be tutors and members of support groups for each other. Most schools have a roster of parents who come regularly to the classroom to assist teachers and students. Some prefer to contribute by working at home preparing visuals and teaching aides to be used in the classroom.

Parents with particular skills can be invaluable resources for classroom or subject area enrichment. Demonstrating a skill in computers, or fine arts and career shadowing can help to extend learning opportunities for students. Participating in the "take-a-student-to-work" projects, chaperonning school activities, and coaching, are other examples of parental contributions.

The role of parents in the Immersion program is one of active participation from the start. Parental involvement is a fundamental ingredient to the educational success of their children. At home, parents can provide extended opportunities to enrich their children's first and second languages. These may include reading, music, art and cultural events.

Another added benefit is that parents who are informed about the French Immersion program in their children's school are able to share that knowledge and their experience with other parents who are considering the program for their children. As well as being advocates for their children and their program, parents can be supportive of high quality French second-language education for all students.

Notes

1 *Guidelines: Advisory Councils for School Leadership*, Manitoba Department of Education and Training, 1995, and its companion volume, *Advisory Councils for School Leadership: A Handbook for Parents, Teachers and Administrators*, Manitoba Department of Education and Training, 1996

5.2 Parents and Homework

Parents are usually concerned about whether they will be able to play an active role in their children's homework. They worry that their lack of French-language skills may make them unable to understand or help.[1]

The parents' role in homework can be summed up in three words: opportunity, motivation and encouragement. Every child needs a homework friendly place to do assignments, free from distraction and interruption, with adequate light and space. Children need basic tools: pencils, erasers, dictionary, thesaurus, verb manual, and whatever other necessities the teacher has placed on the "Tool Kit" list for that grade level. Children also need time to complete their assigned task. Parents can help by negotiating with their child a specific homework period, so that there is quiet, stress-free time to do the work. That's the opportunity part.

A homework book or agenda is a useful tool to remind your child of forthcoming events, assignments, library book due dates, personal appointments and activities. If the need arises, teachers may ask parents to initial the homework book on a regular basis. For younger children, the homework book might be in the form of graphics or pictograms as symbols of routine tasks, special events, required equipment, gym days and library due dates. Older students are encouraged to use a regular agenda, with timetables and a calendar for assignment due dates, as well as tests, reports, long term projects and extracurricular events.

Parents can participate in homework in other ways. English reading and writing are part of the child's homework that English-speaking parents can help with. Looking up words in a French dictionary, finding definitions and writing simple sentences are good opportunities for teamwork while doing homework in French. Parents can help with Math problems even if they do not understand French. The children can explain the task to the parent. The concepts are the same in English and French, whether it's subtraction and addition or division and multiplication, scientific formulas, algebraic equations or chemical reactions, etc. An added bonus is that a lot of learning happens as children explain and teach to parents.

Get Involved in Learning

Not all learning takes place in the classroom. Many of life's lessons can be found in everyday activities involving parents and children.[3] Cutting pizza can be an opportunity to talk about fractions, as well as sharing and cooperation. Shovelling snow can be an illustration of levers at work. Making cookies is an experiment with expanding gases, and so on. Very young children need to experiment with numbers. Suggested number games can include counting cars, seats on the bus, blocks on the floor, stairs up to their bedrooms, and candies in their treat bags.

An important part of learning to read is being read to and reading to others. Children benefit from discussing what they read. Feedback and encouragement from an adult when they are reading can be very powerful as a motivation tool for further reading. Children are consumers of knowledge and information. They love having the opportunity to ask "How come?" This gives a parent the chance to teach and to learn with the child as they find out together how something works or what a new word means.

The parents' role in homework can be summed up in three words: opportunity, motivation and encouragement.

Some Immersion families have made a definite plan to incorporate French videos, music, books, magazines and games into their home entertainment to support language acquisition and to demonstrate and value French cultures and language. The fun of watching a French movie together and sharing a laugh are all good family learning experiences. ▷

Schools recognize that parents and guardians want to be involved in their child's homework. Some may provide workshops that give parents strategies to deal with homework in French and to make them aware of curriculum outcomes and expectations. More articles on this issue are available on the Canadian Parents for French websites http://www.cpfmb.com and http://www.cpf.ca . Manitoba Education, Training and Youth and the Bureau de l'éducation française Division have created documents in the areas of Math, Science and English Language Arts–Immersion which help parents who want to help their children learn the concepts in each of these areas.[4]

Notes

1 "Homework in French? How on Earth do I Help if I Don't Speak French?" Thibodeau, Patricia, Immersion teacher, from a presentation to a parent work shop, September 1997, Canadian Parents for French

2 "Reduce Homework Stress – A Parents' Guide", CPF Manitoba, 2000

3 "Homework in French? How on Earth do I Help if I Don't Speak French?" Thibodeau, Patricia, Immersion teacher, from a presentation to a parent work shop, September 1997, Canadian Parents for French

4 http://www.mtbb.mb.ca

5.3 Enriching the French Immersion Experience

"In immersion, the language is a vehicle for acquiring knowledge from different subject areas. Language teaching and content-teaching are integrated, and the French language is thus perceived as an informational vehicle – a medium by which thought, feelings, and actions are expressed or displayed."[1] Language that is used in real-life situations completes the learning experience. When students use French in the library, the gym, the art room, the woodshop, the playground, the computer room, at home, and with their friends, it becomes a more complete tool for communication.

5.3.1 In Early and Middle Years

Once the child has developed some speaking and reading skills, there are many opportunities for "learning moments" in French. Some of these are right in your neighbourhood, on road and storefront signs. Some of them are available on radio, TV, video or the computer. The public library has all kinds of materials in French: CD-ROM's, cassettes, compact disks, games, newspapers, magazines and books for young people. The choices are endless and most companies providing such programming and materials take into account both age-appropriateness and the linguistic and comprehension levels of expertise in French of the children who will use them.

Programming for young people on radio and TV is well advertised and teachers are supplied with the program-broadcasting guides so that they can advise their students about fun and learner-friendly programs to watch or listen to.[2]

Many suppliers will bring their books, music, videos and computer softwares to the school at the request of teachers, librarians, parent groups and school organizations. Parent groups as well as the local Canadian ▶

Parents for French chapter, sometimes raise money specifically to buy reading or electronic support and supplementary material for the school.

Every Immersion school is provided a cultural budget for the year and administrators can share entertaining and educational opportunities with other schools, to cut costs. Schools can use the monies to pay for such events as artistic presentations with puppet shows, singing and other musical acts, as well as workshops on various topics, plays, and other cultural events. Schools often organize French-language events and assemblies to celebrate their students' accomplishments and to demonstrate their belief and value for second language teaching, learning and culture. These gatherings help make the language real and meaningful for the students.[3]

5.3.2 Extracurricular Activities

At any grade level, it is essential that the students have the opportunity to continue to learn and expand their French language skills in a wide variety of situations, both inside and outside the classroom. A school that provides cultural variety in the form of drama, concerts, videos and interactive multimedia in French will enrich the learning experience of the students. The *Curriculum Policy for French Immersion Program* recommends that student experiences include "a rich linguistic environment, where communication is meaningful and centred on a variety of authentic tasks, [so] that students will make use of the language and meet their educational, personal and social needs."[4]

Many students in Immersion enjoy dramatic arts and theatre production. *Le Théâtre jeunesse*, school drama festivals, *le Concours d'art oratoire*, video productions, class skits allow students to "live the language". Students who live the language learn it much better.

Intramural and team sports can be another opportunity to use French. The specialized vocabulary of a sport can be learned more easily when the students are playing the sport, as well as talking or writing about it. On the court or the field, the students, coaches and officials talk about the play, the goals, areas needing improvement and the successes. Language used during sports can be less formal than the usual interchanges between teacher and students, while still reinforcing the use of language and the specific vocabulary of that sport.

Student leadership is an area where French Immersion students can and do excel; they are also involved in Students Helping Student programs, tutorship programs, space camps, national and international field trips and projects. The possibilities are endless as are the number of clubs, which support and encourage cultural, social, academic and political development. There's everything from running, skiing or ball sport clubs to chess and science clubs of every description, ranging from astronomy to zoology. There are craft clubs like knitting, cooking and sketching, and all kinds of debating, singing, dancing clubs and everything in between. Extracurricular activities like these are valuable additions to the regular school program and contribute to the overal linguistic and personal development of students.

5.3.3 Fun in French in Manitoba

Families can enjoy local festivals and cultural events in French in Manitoba. Attending such events in different communities gives families the opportunity to experience the diversity of accents, vocabulary and culture that exist in the province. Not only does it provide opportunity for children to demonstrate their language skills, it makes the value and pride of their program relevant.

The *Annuaire des services en français au Manitoba* is produced each year by the Société franco-manitobaine. It is a comprehensive source of information, about stores, restaurants, video, music and bookstores, schools, local businesses and groups that support French first and second-language learning. The *Annuaire* is available free at many sites in Manitoba, or from the Société franco-manitobaine (SFM) at 233-ALLO (233-2556).

The website http://www.sfm-mb.ca lists community events in French throughout the year. Staff at *Le Centre de ressources communautaires* will provide information about any of the festivals listed on the calendar. They can be reached at 233-ALLO or toll-free at 1-800-665-4443, or by email at crc@sfm-mb.ca . The Travel Manitoba website, http://www.travelmanitoba.com has more information about Manitoba events and areas where French may be found.

Notes

1 *Curriculum Policy for the French Immersion Program*, Manitoba Education and Training, 1996, p. 4

2 Program guides available quarterly from Radio-Canada

5 The Bureau de l'éducation française Division provides listings of performers available for school tours.

6 *Curriculum Policy for the French Immersion Program*, Manitoba Education and Training, 1996, p. 6

6. After French Immersion, What Next?

6.1 Post-Secondary Choices

Once a student graduates from a French Immersion program, what's next? Students who finish Senior 4 in French Immersion have the choice of continuing to study in French, choosing a University or College where there are French courses available, or entering a post-secondary path in English. In a recent survey of French Immersion graduates in Manitoba, more than 75 % of respondents were attending a post-secondary institution when they completed the survey.[1]

Some students choose to attend a French-language university, either in Manitoba, elsewhere in Canada, or abroad. While pursuing their career path, they are making the commitment to improving their language skills, usually in the company of French first-language students.[2] In the same survey cited earlier, approximately 12% of the students were at the *Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface* taking university or community college courses in French.[3]

Realizing that there are many more Immersion graduates entering the post-secondary system, some universities have developed English and French courses especially tailored for Immersion grads.[4] These courses allow the students to maintain and enhance their French, and broaden their knowledge of French culture, history and current events. The courses are usually structured so that the students are encouraged to read French books, magazines, newspapers and view French films and videos in order to research, analyse, synthesize and represent their findings.

Some students entering an all-English university take French grammar and literature courses[5] just to keep current with the language. Students in certain faculties such as Business, Political Science and International Development are frequently provided the opportunity to do a practicum in a country where French is the language of the work place. Some students choose to enrol in non-credit courses at a language institute, – Alliance française, for example – which provides them additional practice in speaking and writing French which they have come to appreciate and enjoy.

Universities with flourishing French Departments usually have a French discussion-reading group whereby students can use French to discuss books or current events. Universities or Colleges with students from francophone nations may have cultural associations for students who speak French.[6]

Immersion graduates can seek out other immersion grads, with whom to speak French and form study, social and working groups. Immersion students, who come from a closely-knit school community, where they depend on each other, tend to stay friends and help each other keep up their skills and seek occasions to use them, be that through social events, travel or workplace scenarios.

Notes

1 Survey of 1998 and 1999 Manitoba French Immersion Graduates, 2002

2 Ibid.

3 In Manitoba, students studying in French attend the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface, where approximately one-third of students are graduates of French Immersion.

4 University of Saskatchewan Course Calendar 2001

5 University of Manitoba, University of Winnipeg, Brandon University

6 Cultural associations are listed with Student Services at the universities.

6.2 The World of Work

The employment structure of the westen world has evolved tremendously in recent years: long gone are the days of one career, one employer, one work place. Today's conception of employment includes fewer boundaries, more independent workers, and increased communications. The French Immersion graduate is well positioned to benefit from these trends. "The ownership of two languages has increasingly become seen as an asset as the 'communication world' gets smaller."[1]

It is conceivable to view these developments as continuing and perhaps accelerating as we progress in the 21st century. French Immersion graduates who can communicate effectively in English and French have an added attractive quality for employers. "As the amount of information available has dramatically increased, and the ease of delivering information around the world has quickened, so bilinguals, particularly those with 'English bilingualism', have become more important in the employment market."[2]

Employers don't necessarily hire graduates for a specific job, but for a set of skills. They value communications skills, innovative approaches to problems and the ability to adjust to changing conditions. "The nature of the

New World Economy is an ability to cross boundaries, and bilinguals are skilled in such behavior."[3] David Stewart-Patterson, Senior Vice-President of Policy and Communications for the Business Council on National Issues cited: "The more adaptable you are to other languages and cultures, the better off you will be in terms of career prospects."[4]

The skills that make French Immersion graduates valuable additions to the work force of any company are:

- the abilty to cope in various environments;
- the resourcefulness, having had to devise new ways of dealing with learning situations;
- the flexibility, having had to look at problems in two ways;
- the confidence and positive self esteem.[5]

The employment possibilities awaiting the Immersion graduate are many and varied, and in an ever-increasing variety of fields. Many of them involve good communication skills, both in English and in French, and many of them in more languages. Here are some of these sectors:

Business, Law, Information technology, Public relations, Medicine, Media, Education, Tourism, Government, International Development, Research

The importance of the French language in the world of work is not to be diminished. French is an official ▷

language of the European Union, the second largest trading bloc in the world. French is spoken in two of the G7 countries. French is the official language of many African countries and international organizations such as the Olympic Movement and the United Nations. French is a great asset. "Bilinguals typically have marketable language skills and intercultural knowledge."[6] Page 427

More and more companies are hiring first for interpersonal and communications skills, then training their employees to do a specific job. Immersion graduates have the skills to succeed in many fields here in Canada and around the world.

Notes

1 *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism (3rd edition), Colin Baker* Multilingual Matters, Clevedon, England, 2001, p. 417

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid. p. 428

4 "Some life-long skills and benefits French-language education offers", French Second-language Education: A Millennium Challenge, Canadian Parents for French, 1999

5 Prepared with information from Human Resources Canada. This list originally appeared in the Canadian Parents for French—Manitoba newsletter, 1996

6 *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism (3rd edition), Colin Baker* Multilingual Matters, Clevedon, England, 2001, p. 427

7. Questions and Answers: Summary

1. Learning French

What is French Immersion?

French Immersion is a second language program and one of Manitoba's four recognized Programs. Its goal is to have children achieve linguistic competency in both French and English while achieving all the educational and social outcomes of the English program.

Who is French Immersion for?

French Immersion is designed for children whose first language is not French and who have little or no knowledge of French prior to entering the program. There are no entrance requirements for French Immersion. Any child of an age to enter Kindergarten or Grade 1 can start Early French Immersion. Other entry points to the French Immersion program are Grades 4 and 7, but these are only available in two school divisions at the time of publication.

Will my child succeed in French Immersion?

All children learn at different rates and in their own individual way. Most children will learn as well in French Immersion as they would in the English program.

What are some advantages of learning a second language?

People who speak a second language tend to be culturally sensitive and capable of resisting stereotyping. They enjoy broader access to litterature, drama, films and music. Communication skills in the first language can be improved by the study of a second language. Learning a second language positively impacts all learning. In the 21st century of a knowledge based society, a bilingual person has "an invaluable added strength in life".[1]

Why not wait until they have learned to read and write English before starting French, in middle years?

Very young children learn languages much faster and easier than older or young adults. The longer they can spend learning both French and English, the better their skills in both languages will be. In Manitoba, most French Immersion students learn to read and write in English before doing so in French.

What does "brain research" say about second language learning?

One important recent discovery is that there is a "window of opportunity " for language learning before the age of ten. Young learners have a better chance of acquiring a second language than learners who begin to study the language later in life.

How do children handle learning two languages at the same time? Won't they be confused?

Most children who begin Immersion in Kindergarten already know and speak English very well. They have a fairly wide vocabulary and understand many grammatical concepts of the English language. They are not starting both languages at the same time in terms of language development.

2. French Immersion: A Canadian Success Story

When did French Immersion start in Canada?

The best known French Immersion experiment took place in St. Lambert, Quebec in 1965, but there have been trials as early as the late 50's in Quebec City and early 60's in Toronto.

Note

1 Saul, John Ralston, Canadian Parents for French National News, Winter 2000

Why was French Immersion offered in Manitoba?
As parents realized the benefits of second language learning while becoming confident of the success of the immersion approach, they lobbied to have school divisions offer it.

What about funding?
The Official Languages in Education Program allows for federal funds to be transferred to provinces to help finance second language education. Initially, these funds helped establish programs in school divisons across the province. Today, they help defray the extra costs of materials in French, transportation, professional development and cultural activities.

Is French Immersion an official program in Manitoba?
Yes. In 1996, the provincial government adopted the *Curriculum Policy for the French Immersion Program* which outlines the expectations for the program and the requirements for graduation.

3. The French Immersion Approach In Manitoba

Who teaches French Immersion?
French Immersion teachers are bilingual. Increasingly, many have learned French as a second language themselves and have studied specific strategies and methods of teaching a second language to children whose home language is not French.

How will my child get to school?
If French Immersion is not offered in the neighbourhood school, busing is generally provided for children who live more than 1.6 km away from his designated school. School divisions are responsible for this service.

How is my child going to make friends with neighbourhood children if he takes the bus to another school?
The opportunity to play with neighbourhood children is always there. Children who go to school on the bus, however, have the opportunity to extend their friendships with children of similar interests from other neighbourhoods.

What happens if we move to another region in Canada?
A complete list of all French Immersion programs and schools found in every province and territory can be obtained from Canadian Parents for French website http://www.cpf.ca . While there may be differences in program delivery, the basic principles remain the same.

How much French is "enough"?
Since time, practice and exposure have a direct corrolation to learning a language, students who complete the entire K to Senior 4 program in French, will have the best chance of becoming functionally bilingual.

How do I find out which school my child should attend?
There usually are information sessions in the school divisions to explain the French Immersion and English programs, where they are available and how to access them. Individual schools also have Open Houses to inform parents about the Kindergarten class. Parents can always contact their school division for information on the availability of the French Immersion program.

How much French is there in a French Immersion school?
That depends on the school model. The more staff members there are who speak French, the more French children will hear in the hallways, gym, library and playground. In a single-track school, the language of the school is French, except for English Language Arts class.

How do I prepare my preschooler for Kindergarten?
In most respects but the language, Kindergarten is the same in both programs. Your child should meet the teacher, see the classroom, try out the playground and talk with you about the school bus and the whole idea of school. For many of them, the experience is not that different from the preschool or daycare they are used to. A positive attitude and an optimistic outlook for the new experience is the best way to let your child know that you can both look forward to Kindergarten as just another step in life's adventure.

▶

If Kindergarten is "100% French" do the children have to speak French all the time?
After a transition period, the teacher speaks mostly French and the students speak English. Once they learn the sounds and some words and phrases, most children start imitating their teacher and speak simple French. It is not expected that they will miraculously start speaking French without going through the development stages similar to those of learning their home language.

How will my child react to being in a class where no one speaks English?
The children speak English, and the teacher speaks French. The teachers use many visual clues and gestures as they speak, so the children are able to follow what is being said, even if they do not understand all the words. The teacher always speaks English in the case of an emergency or when emotional support is required.

Is French harder than English?
Demands on the students differ because of the emphasis on oral and listening skills. There is no real difference in curriculum expectations and outcomes. There may be times when the student has courses with heavier reading or writing loads, just as there will be times and semesters when they have lighter loads.

How can we find out what options are available in French at the Middle and Senior Years?
It is likely your local Middle and Senior Years schools will have information evenings for students and parents to describe the program at the schools. Many schools also have printed material that shows which course options are available in English and in French.

If there is only an hour or so of English each school day, won't they forget English?
Students typically live in an English milieu. With all the English in the community, at home, on the playground, and the multi-media exposure, there is no chance that your children will forget English. Research has shown that by Grades 5 or 6, French Immersion students equal or surpass their peers in the English program in most aspects of language arts.

What about Mathematics and Science courses? Should they be taken in English, especially in the Senior years?
Throughout the first eight or nine years of the French Immersion program, Mathematics and Science are taught in French, contributing in no small manner to the overall language development of pupils. Our experience and the research indicate no reason to take Math and Science in English in the Senior Years. Furthermore, for graduates who have studied in Math and Science in French in high school and in English in University, this is essentially a non-issue.

4. French Immersion: An Opportunity for All Children
What happens if my child is a struggling learner in French Immersion?
Resource teachers and counsellors are available to help children who need it. Help may be available in English or in French, but in most cases, the best way to treat a learning difficulty is within the program. It is not likely that the language is the root of the problem.

Is French Immersion for every child?
French Immersion is meant for every child who can learn to speak one language. There may be challenges for children with specific speech, hearing or other difficulties, but it is expected that every child who can learn a first language can benefit from the French Immersion approach.
How will I know if French Immersion is working for my child?
Your best advisor is the classroom teacher and the school support services. Working with your child every day, they will have the best information on difficulties your child may experience, and be able to suggest help if it is needed. Parents and students frequently participate in the creation of Individual Educational plans as is appropriate.

Should my child leave French Immersion to get help?
Most research indicates that leaving the program should only be seen as a last resort. The effect on children's self-esteem when they are transferred from French Immersion to the English program because they have difficulties is usually not conductive to solving the problem. A struggling learner's pride in being bilingual is an added benefit and can be motivation to persevere.

Isn't French Immersion just for gifted children?
French Immersion is an "equal opportunity" program. There are no entrance requirements or tests. All children eligible for kindergarten or Grade 1 can enroll in the program.

What happens if my child leaves Immersion after a few years?
Students who move into the English stream generally find no real difference in their performance. The curricula expectations and learning outcomes are the same in the two programs. Children learn the same skills and content in all subjects, regardless of language.

5. French Immersion: Beyond the Classroom
Can parents get involved in school activities?
Yes. A good place to begin is to contact the teacher, administrator or to attend a parent council meeting to have an idea of where their interests can best serve the school. If parents want to volunteer in a classroom, it is a good idea to discuss with teachers where and how help is needed.

How can I help with homework if I don't speak the language?
Encourage children to be responsible and organized. Provide supplies and French reference materials, a quiet place and time to complete assignments. With regards to a specific difficulty, have them explain the problem in the home language and help them in that language. Make a habit of reading to them and with them in the home language.

How can I support the learning of French?
Be positive. Show genuine interest and pride in what they are learning. Seek language and cultural experiences in French: books, theatre, music, software, radio and TV.

Other Questions
1. **How will my child compare to other graduates when it comes to college entrance?**
The courses taken in French Immersion are the same, in content and outcomes, as the ones taught in English. Math, for instance, is the same level, whether taken in English or French, as are Chemistry, History, English or Biology. The students' mark statements show which ones were taken in French and which in English. Universities accept students on the basis of the number of "40-level" credits they have obtained.

2. **What can you say about bursaries and scholarships?**
By virtue of the fact they can apply to more funding sources, French Immersion students have access to more bursaries and scholarships, as a group, than students in the English program.

3. **What if I want to learn French, too?**
Some parent groups have started French courses for parents who want to learn French. Language learning institutes like St. Boniface College, divisional adult education courses and Alliance Française also provide adult classes in French, from Beginner to Advanced levels. Language software and Distance Education courses are also readily available to parents.

8. Important Links

French Immersion Schools in Manitoba
http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ks4/schools/imm-ang.pdf

Manitoba Education, Training and Youth
http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/

Canadian Parents for French (CPF)
http://www.cpf.ca (national) http://www.cpfmb.com/ (Manitoba)

Manitoba Association of Parent Councils (MAPC)
http://www.mapc.mb.ca/

Manitoba Association of School Trustees
http://www.mast.mb.ca/

Collège Universitaire de Saint-Boniface (CUSB)
http://www.ustboniface.mb.ca

University of Manitoba
http://www.umanitoba.ca

University of Winnipeg
http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/web/index.shtml

University of Brandon
http://www.brandonu.ca/

Red River College
http://www.rrc.mb.ca/

École technique et professionelle du CUSB
http://www.ustboniface.mb.ca/pro/proETP.htm

Éducatrices et Éducateurs francophones du Manitoba (ÉFM)
http://www.mts.net/~efm

Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers (CAIT/ACPI)
http://acpi.scedu.umontreal.ca

9. Appendix A

Senior Years French Immersion Program

Out of a total of 28 credits, a minimum of 14 credits from courses taught in French are required to obtain the provincial diploma in French Immersion. At each grade in Senior 1 and in Senior 2, a minimum of 4 credits must be completed in French and at each grade in Senior 3 and in Senior 4, a minimum of 3 credits must be completed in French.

Senior Years Graduation Credit Requirements (minimum 28 credits)

Compulsory Credits: 19

Senior 1
Compulsory Subject Areas (6 credits)

Français	1
English Language arts - Immersion	1
mathématiques	1
sciences de la nature	1
sciences humaines	1
éducation physique et éducation à la santé	1

Senior 2
Compulsory Subject Areas (6 credits)

Français	1
English Language arts - Immersion	1
mathématiques	1
sciences de la nature	1
sciences humaines	1
éducation physique et éducation à la santé	1

Senior 3
Compulsory Subject Areas (4 credits)

Français	1
English Language arts - Immersion	1
mathématiques	1
sciences humaines	1

Senior 4
Compulsory Subject Areas (3 credits)

Français	1
English Language arts - Immersion	1
mathématiques	1

Optional Credits: (see your school for complete list)
9 credits from subject areas such as

- Français (additional courses for credit)
- Anglais (additional courses for credit)
- autre langues
- mathématiques (additional courses for credit)
- sciences de la nature (additional courses for credit)
- sciences humaines (additional courses for credit)
- éducation à la santé
- éducation physique
- études technologiques
  - *formation professionelle industrielle*
  - *économie familiale*
  - *affaires et commercialisation*
  - *arts industriels*
- les arts
  - *arts plastiques*
  - *éducation musicale*
  - *arts dramatiques*
  - *danse*
- vie autonome
- others as initiated by the school or student

- Students must meet the entrance requirements of the post-secondary education (college or university), training, or work situation they intend to pursue.
- Within the optional subject areas, students must complete one Senior 3 credit and one Senior 4 credit.
- **Note**: School-Initiated Courses (SICs) and Student-Initiated Projects (SIPs) may be used to fulfil the graduation requirements within the optional credits to a maximum of 11 and 3 respectively. Depending on the different requirements of the four school programs, the number of possible SICs used as optional credits may very.
- Out of a total of 28 credits, a minimum of 14 credits from courses taught in French are required to obtain the provincial diploma in French.

Note: Manitoba Education, Training and Youth changed the Senior Years graduation requirements based on consultations throughout Manitoba. These changes are explained in detail in the report Increasing Choice and Flexibility: Changes to Senior Years Graduation Requirements (March 2001) at the following website, http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ks4/policy/gradreg/choice-flexibility.html

9. Appendix B

For the the Curriculum Policy for the French Immersion Program click below
http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ks4/docs/policy/frenchimm/